REMARKS

Claims 1-23 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claim 23 is added. No new matter is added.

I. Claim Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 1-22 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over U.S. Patent 6,343,846 to Asano in view of U.S. Patent 5,731,823 to Miller et al. ("Miller"). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

Applicants respectfully submit that the primary reference of Asano cannot be used as a basis for forming the rejection of any of the rejected claims because the subject matter of the instant application was invented prior to the May 2, 1998 effective filing date of Asano, as stated in the attached Declaration Under 37 CFR §1.131.

The Office Action admits that Asano fails to expressly disclose "if the above noted image processing is raster image processing that creates a raster image of the color image, whereby the raster image processing includes the overmarking processing that allows both of the at least one first color and the second color to be separately included in the overmarked pixels in the same raster image," as recited in claim 1. In other words, the Office Action alleges that Asano discloses each and every feature recited in claim 1, but for the specific feature of raster image processing. Although raster image processing is disclosed in Miller and known to those of skill in the art, Miller fails to disclose each and every feature recited in the rejected claims.

Furthermore, Miller is silent regarding overmarking or undercolor reduction. Rather, Miller pertains to optimizing controllable parameters relating to producing printed material on a hard copy output device (column 1, lines 8-10). Miller pertains more specifically to optimizing color matching between the colors displayed on a CRT monitor and a printed hard copy of that image (see, for example, column 3, line 35 - column 4, line 60).

Miller also discloses that rasterizing may be conducted in a variety of conventional manners known to those skilled in the art, such as choosing a resolution which yields a selected optimum balance of throughput and print quality (column 5, lines 35-39). Although Miller discloses that statistics may be collected regarding a selected image that includes recording in which black objects touch color objects, Miller discloses only obtaining such statistics for use in "bleed control" (column 6, lines 38-47). For instance, if "black to color bleed control" is to be handled on an object by object basis, then black objects that touch color or fall within color regions may have colors modified by step 92. In this case, step 92 ensures the images are printed with the correct combination of CMYK to provide a good quality black without bleeding into the "process black" of the color regions (column 7, lines 35-45). Accordingly, Miller is silent regarding performing raster image processing to create a raster image of the color image, the raster image processing including overmarking processing that allows both the at least one first color and the second color to be separately included in the overmarked pixels in the same raster image, and modify an image data of the overmarked pixels and the raster image to achieve undercolor reduction by reducing a value corresponding to a reduced amount of underlying marking material.

As Asano is not available as prior art and Miller fails to disclose each and every feature recited in the rejected claims, withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1-22 is respectfully requested.

II. New Claim

Claim 23 is allowable over the applied reference of Miller as Miller fails to disclose or suggest a method of processing image data of a color image for marking, the color image containing overmarked pixels where at least one first CMY color is to be overmarked by a black color, the method comprising: generating information that designates the overmarked pixels; performing raster image processing to create a raster image of the color image, the

raster image processing including overmarking processing that allows both the at least one first CMY color and the black color to be separately included in the overmarked pixels in the same raster image; and modifying CMY image data of the overmarked pixels in the raster image to achieve undercolor reduction by modifying a value corresponding to a reduced amount of an underlying CMY marking material.

III. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1-23 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,

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Attachments:
Declaration Under 37 CFR §1.131 (2)

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